

Little Houghton Church of England Primary School

Lodge Close, Lodge Road, Northampton, NN71AH

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although pupils' achievement is improving rapidly by the time they leave in Year 6, too few have made better than expected progress in the past, particularly in writing.
- Too few more-able pupils reach the higher level (level 3) in Year 2.
- Although improving rapidly, teaching is not consistently good. There is not enough good or better teaching in Years 1 to 4 to enable pupils to achieve well.
- In some lessons the pace of learning is not brisk enough to ensure that pupils make good progress.
- Work is sometimes too hard or too easy because teachers do not use information on what pupils already understand consistently well enough to plan tasks, especially for more-able pupils.
- Although the new school marking policy is starting to be effective it is not used consistently enough to make sure all pupils know the next steps in their learning.
- Computers are not used often enough to help pupils put together long pieces of writing.
- Drama and talking out loud are not used consistently well enough to help pupils think out what to write.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of leadership and management is good. The strong and dynamic leadership of the new headteacher together with a much improved and effective governing body is rapidly improving the school.
- Achievement is rising and teaching is improving.
- Achievement in Years 5 and 6 has improved and is now consistently good.
- Pupils behave well. They are kept safe and have a strong understanding of how to stay safe.
- Links with parents and carers have improved considerably in the last year and are now very strong.
- The good provision for children in the Reception year is enabling them to make good progress and achieve well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 13 lessons or parts of lessons, and observed six teachers. Many observations were made jointly with the headteacher. Pupils were observed and spoken to at playtimes and lunchtimes.
- He held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff, and had a discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- He observed the work of the school and considered additional information gained from an examination of the school's own self-evaluation and the associated school development plan. Samples of pupils work were scrutinised and pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 were heard reading.
- Other documents looked at included curriculum planning, those relating to safeguarding and child protection, records of pupils' attainment and progress, records of behaviour and information relating to the monitoring of teaching.
- The responses of the 42 parents and carers on the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were analysed. Some parents and carers were spoken to at the start of the school day.
- Inspection questionnaires received from staff were analysed.

Inspection team

Stephen Lake, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than most primary schools.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils are White British with very few pupils from other ethnic groups. No pupils are known to speak English as an additional language.
- Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals or funding through the pupil premium (extra money given to the school by the government). This proportion is well below average.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, and at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are below average.
- The headteacher has been in post for less than a year.
- The school's most recent results cannot be compared to the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum standards for pupils' attainment and progress, because there were not enough pupils to make such comparisons meaningful.
- None of the pupils receive alternative provision (none are taught in other schools or units).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that a large proportion of teaching is good or better, especially in Years 1 to 4, by:
 - making more consistent use of information on pupils' progress to plan tasks that meet the needs of all pupils, especially those who are more able
 - ensuring that learning proceeds at a brisk pace throughout lessons
 - improving the consistency with which the school marking policy is applied so that all pupils know the next steps in their learning.
- Raise achievement Years 1 to 4, particularly in writing, to match that in other parts of the school by:
 - building upon the good practice now in place to teach letters and sounds so that those pupils who are not making good progress in writing can benefit from this effective strategy
 - providing more consistent opportunities for pupils to clarify their thinking through talking before committing their ideas to paper
 - ensuring that the school strategy for using drama as an aid to developing writing is used effectively in all classes
 - making better use of information and communication technology as a tool for developing extended writing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement in Years 1 and 2 requires improvement because too few pupils make better than expected progress, and not all those capable of it attain the higher Level 3. Progress is improving this year, but not rapidly enough to ensure good achievement because too little of the teaching is consistently good or better.
- Achievement in Years 3 to 6 varies with pupils making significantly better progress in Years 5 and 6 as a result of improvements. This inconsistency, though, especially in writing, is holding down the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress through the key stage.
- Children start in the Reception class with skills that are broadly similar to those expected at that age but small numbers mean these vary from year to year. They make good progress because activities interest them and challenge them, and provide a good balance of things they choose themselves and things the teacher leads them into. They start Year 1 well prepared for learning in the next key stage.
- A new strategy for the teaching of letters and sounds (referred to as phonics) was introduced in September across Years R, 1 and 2 based upon all adults working as a team with all pupils so that children and pupils could move between groups at different levels to meet their needs. This approach is proving very successful and similar initiatives are starting in mathematics. This revision to the curriculum is not yet applied in Years 3 and 4 so the improvements are not as obvious here.
- In last year's assessment of phonic skills (the ability to link letters and sounds) in Year 1 pupils' attainment was broadly average. The impact of the revised strategies for teaching phonics can already be seen in the school's own most recent assessment of phonic skills which show these pupils abilities to use phonics has improved. Pupils have made good progress in reading by the end of Year 6.
- The small group of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive suitable support to keep them included in lessons and make similar progress to other pupils.
- The school has very few pupils supported or who have been supported through the pupil premium. None of these have taken the Year 6 national assessments, so no comparison of their attainment and progress against other groups in the school is possible.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet good, despite improvements, because pace drops in some parts of lessons, some tasks are not pitched at the right level for pupils, and marking is not used to consistently good effect.
- The quality of teaching is improving as teachers start to implement the new strategies for improving writing and as a result of good quality support from the new headteacher. Teachers have opportunities to see best practice in other schools and are applying this to their own teaching.
- A key factor influencing the improvement is a better understanding of what pupils already know

can do and understand through the much better assessment procedures. This is enabling most teachers to plan tasks that challenge and extend the learning of pupils. Nevertheless this is not fully embedded yet and inconsistencies continue, most noticeably in Years 1 to 4, particularly in Years 3 and 4. Where these inconsistencies occur tasks set are aimed too much at the middle of the class and are either too demanding for some or too easy for others. This slows learning, especially for more able pupils.

- The new school strategy of drama for writing is starting to help improve pupils' writing skills, especially those of boys, as they act out stories as a preparation for writing. It is not yet used to full effect in all classes.
- Talk partners are used across the school to allow pupils to verbalise their thoughts and prepare answers but this is not rigorous enough. In some classes too few opportunities are taken to use talk as a preparation for writing with pupils sitting silently during whole class sessions while the teacher talks with just one or two pupils. Pace drops in a variety of lessons because pupils are not actively involved enough in whole class sessions. Sometimes this is because they are not moved on to individual or group work quickly.
- In Years 5 and 6 pupils have tasks that challenge them well and motivate them to learn especially in mathematics. The most able mathematicians are supported well by being able to visit a local secondary school on a regular basis and work with other groups of able mathematicians. This is proving very successful.
- Teachers make good use of information and communication technology, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to present lessons for pupils. Some pupils use a new computer program to practice and consolidate their mathematics skills. In Years 5 and 6 pupils are confident using technology in a range of ways to support their learning but the use of computers to support learning, especially to help produce extended pieces of writing, is not firmly established.
- A new marking policy is understood well by pupils and many good examples of its use can be seen especially in Years 5 and 6. However, it is not used consistently especially in Years 3 and 4 and this limits its effectiveness in showing pupils the next steps in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils, staff, governors and parents and carers all agree that behaviour is good. The school is a friendly, calm and welcoming environment in which to learn. The vast majority of pupils are polite and courteous and behave well, showing positive attitudes to learning. On the playground all ages mix together well.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of bullying, including cyber bullying, discriminatory language and prejudice-based bullying. They say that very little occurs in the school and all are confident that adults would deal with it effectively if it did occur.
- Pupils say that a very small number of pupils, mainly boys occasionally misbehave a little in lessons. Inspection evidence shows that a very small group of pupils find it difficult to sustain concentration in lessons. Although this is usually confined to activities such as shuffling around the classroom this can distract the teacher and slow learning a little. Nevertheless even when teaching is mundane and fails to motivate or stimulate them the vast majority continue to show respect for their teachers and each other.
- Attendance is above average and as a result pupils are making the most of the effective learning

now taking place in many lessons.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has drawn together staff and governors into a team with a clear vision and the drive and determination to improve the school. The impact can already be seen in the improvements in pupils' progress. All staff are overwhelmingly positive about the leadership of the headteacher. All parents and carers who responded to Parent View agree the school is led and managed well and many of those spoken to commented upon the positive impact that the new headteacher is having.
- The quality of teaching is monitored frequently and, with good support from the local authority and local cluster schools, robust action has been taken to strengthen the quality of teaching. Observations of lessons are used effectively to identify how teaching can be improved and good quality training is provided to teachers to support improvement. The school can demonstrate rapid improvements by individual staff, as a result of good leadership. Performance management targets are set for teachers using data from the new assessment system. Regular reviews are carried out of progress towards targets. The headteacher has ensured that systems do not allow salary rises without improvements in pupils' progress.
- Links with parents and carers are vastly improved according to those spoken with on 'Walk in Wednesday' (when parents and carers can stay in school with their children for the first 20 minutes and share their learning activities). Those spoken to were effusive in their support for the way the new headteacher and the governing body have improved communication.
- The broad and balanced range of subjects and topics studied supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The strong contribution to pupils' understanding of social and cultural matters through the fundraising for a pupil in a school in Uganda is contributing to pupils' cultural awareness well.
- Revised and improved assessment procedures enable easy checks on equality of opportunity and possible discrimination and provide high quality information to the governing body and senior leaders on school performance.
- Safeguarding meets requirements and the training of all staff and governors in this area is up-to-date. Strong and effective links with parents and carers and with a range of local authority agencies ensure that those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are well cared for.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The checks made by governors have improved significantly since the previous inspection as a result of good training made available through the local authority. Governors also say that their task has been made much easier by higher quality information from the headteacher. This is supplemented by regular reports from the school improvement officer and is enabling governors to have good information about the quality of teaching. The governing body monitors the budget well. The small additional funding available through the pupil premium is used to provide additional teaching materials for those pupils supported by this funding, and governors check it is having an impact even though numbers of pupils involved are small. Governors undertake frequent and regular training, including recent training on the interpretation of data. They are rigorous in the examination of school performance and ensure that this information is used in the headteacher's performance management to set challenging targets. They are well aware of what is being done to reward good teachers and tackle weaknesses.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122025
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	406072

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Linda Browett
Headteacher	Carolyn Fairbrother
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2011
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